

Health and Safety **Solution**

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland

Protection from eye injuries

What is the problem?

Workers can sustain eye injuries when exposed to airborne fragments from work processes such as cutting, drilling or grinding metal, timber or other materials.

What are the risks?

Eye injuries include lacerations and penetration injuries, and can result in scarring, loss of clear vision, and partial or complete blindness.

What is a solution to the problem?

If a particular task or piece of equipment is producing airborne fragments, try changing the task or using different equipment. Such tasks may also need to be screened off or isolated from other workers to minimise the risk of injury from being too close to the work being performed.

Always aim for higher order controls

The first step should always be to try to eliminate or isolate the hazard. Personal protective equipment (PPE) is not always the first or best solution. Use it only when all other options have been considered.

If the task or equipment generating the airborne fragments cannot be removed, make sure that workers exposed to the hazard are wearing appropriate PPE including eye protection. The types of available eye protection vary depending on the needs of the worker and task performed.

Make sure the eye protection is suitable for the work being performed. Although a workplace may require safety glasses to be worn on site, these may not be appropriate for specific tasks and protection from deflected fragments. For example, in a confined space, where airborne fragments can rebound from nearby surfaces, workers may be required to wear close-fitted goggles in addition to a full-face shield.



Image 1 – Example of prescription safety glasses



Image 2 – Example of safety glasses



Image 3 – Example of safety goggles



Image 4 – Example of protective face shield

If you're not sure what type of eye protection a particular task requires, try talking to a supplier about the type of eye protection that may be needed. Check if your supplier can come to your workplace to tailor eye protection for workers, including options for prescription eyewear.

Alternatively, check the operating manual of the equipment being used that is creating the airborne fragments for guidance on suitable eye protection. The manufacturer or supplier of the equipment may also be able to provide information on the appropriate PPE for using that equipment.

Note that any eye protection should be compliant with the applicable parts of Australian Standards AS/NZS 1337.1:2010 *Personal eye protection - Eye and face protectors for occupational applications* and AS/NZS 1337.6:2007 *Personal eye protection – Prescription eye protectors against low and medium impact*. The products and packaging are required to be marked in accordance with these standards.

Further information

For detailed information on reducing the risk of eye injuries through selection of eye protection see AS/NZS 1336:1997 *Recommended practices for occupational eye protection*.

Further information is available from www.worksafe.qld.gov.au or by calling the WHS Infoline on 1300 369 915.

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<http://www.opticaldiscountcentre.com.au/Prescription-safety-glasses.html>

<http://www.aonesafetyequipment.com/index.htm>

<http://benlang4.wordpress.com/2009/11/18/face-sheild/>